

Friday, November 15th is America Recycles Day, sponsored by Keep America Beautiful. This day is designated to celebrate and promote recycling in the United States. Citizens are encouraged to learn how to recycle in their communities and to renew their recycling efforts. More detailed information on America Recycles Day and Keep America Beautiful can be found at kab.org

Although this may be redundant for some of you, I would like to highlight some fundamental information regarding recycling here in Belmont. Regardless of your current recycling habits, I challenge you and your family to improve your efforts by following the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle mantra.

Belmont is a dual stream community.

This means that Belmont residents need to separate paper and cardboard from plastic, tin, aluminum, and glass. This is accomplished by placing paper in paper bags or setting the paper flat in one bin and by putting plastic, glass, and aluminum containers in a different bin. For residents that have a lot of container recycling, it might be more efficient to use a larger barrel. It can't be larger than 32 gallons and has to be labeled with 2 recycling stickers (available at DPW or Clerk's Office). Please refer to the recycling guidelines when placing an item in your bin. Completing your recycling correctly pays off in the long run.

Plastic grocery bags or plastic film should not be recycled curbside.

Plastic bags and film are recyclable, but not at the curb. Residents shouldn't use them to hold recyclables either. The bags get caught in the machines where the recyclables are sorted and shut down production. Plastic grocery bags and other plastic film should be recycled at supermarkets. Look for the specific bins located by the front doors of the store. The types of plastic film that can be placed in these bins consist of plastic shopping bags, clean baggies and zip locks, dry-cleaning bags, bread and produce bags, packaging around paper towels, toilet paper and napkins, plastic around cases of single serving beverages, bubble wrap and newspaper sleeves.

It is especially important to follow recycling collection regulations now more than ever. China is enforcing strict standards for waste imports and prohibiting containers filled with contaminated recycling to be unloaded at their docks. These actions have been labeled 'Operation Green Fence' and are imposed to protect China's environment, which has been polluted by the recycling industry. These stricter regulations are having an effect in the U.S. forcing higher standards at the recycling facilities. The contaminated recycling that routinely went to China now needs to be dealt with here.

Don't focus on recycling more, focus on trashing less.

A crazy statement coming from a recycling coordinator, but the goal is to have fewer items go in the trash. It would be better for a family of four to put out one trash barrel with one bin full of paper and one bin full of containers rather than three trash barrels with four bins of containers (mostly single serve plastic water

bottles) and four bags of paper. Why? A family of four that has only one barrel of trash is doing a great job of reducing and reusing. They reduce by buying less stuff, buying in bulk, and looking for products that have less packaging. They reuse by donating unwanted clothing, books, and toys, using reusable mugs, water bottles and bags, and renting or sharing items that are used less frequently. Learning how to reduce and reuse results in having less stuff to throw away. Following these sustainable habits lead to preserving our natural resources and saving the Town money on our disposal contract tipping fees with Wheelabrator. Any questions or suggestions, please contact Mary Beth Calnan/Belmont Recycling Coordinator at mcalnan@belmont-ma.gov or 617-993-2689.